



Tum-tee-tum-tee-tum-tee...

Archers star Sara Coward celebrated Surbiton's 50th farmers' market by cutting a chocolate cake (left).

Sara (Caroline Sterling in the radio soap for 35 years), also signed copies of Dialogues with my Dog, about saving her lurcher Sati from a life of abuse.

"Ambridge doesn't have a farmers' market anything like as posh as the one here in Surbiton," she confided.

The next event in Maple Road on Saturday, March 15 carries the slogan Keep Calm and Visit Surbiton Farmers' Market, a defiant response to recent storms and showers.

Attractions include free NHS health checks, while the Royal Star and Garter Home in Upper Brighton Road is running a charity stall.



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Parry's on Hollyoaks

Tolworth actor Parry Glasspool, who turned 22 last week, has his first big TV break, in Hollyoaks Later, a post-watershed spin-off from the Channel 4 soap.

After getting a 2:1 in his acting degree at Ofsted-acclaimed Kingston College (playing Puck in a student version of A Midsummer Night's Dream), he was snapped up at a Hollyoaks audition.

"It was brilliant; I got to travel to Spain and shoot in some amazing locations, and worked with top-notch actors like Danny Dyer," said Parry, who loved his student days in Kingston. "I'm very grateful to all my lecturers," he added.

His tip for success? "Don't expect work to just fall in your lap. And stay positive; it can be a tough little world for us drama queens out there!"

You can order a pint of Surbiton

The town's first brewery opens in seven weeks, allowing real ale fans to sup pints a few paces from the fermentation vessels.

Beer production will be housed in the old coaching sheds at the back of The Antelope in Maple Road, with the first frothing jars being pulled at the end of April.

Until Surbiton's very own ale is ready, drinkers will have to make do with 10 alternative beers and five real ciders, currently on offer via a formidable line of handpumps at the revamped local.

The pub is being run by the aptly named Pete Brew and Ash

Zobell, who made their name at the Antelope's sister establishment, the Sussex Arms, Twickenham Green, winning the Campaign for Real Ale's pub-of-the-year prize two years running.

The pair have recently been travelling, but rang licensees James Morgan and Richard Craig on their return to see what opportunities were around.

They have the challenge of reviving one of Surbiton's sleeping giants, and opening a micro brewery producing ales bearing the town's name.

● Full story on p2



Ash Zobell behind the impressive row of handpumps at the relaunched Antelope

Why are our starlings disappearing?

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Surbiton's starling population is in sudden and dramatic decline. Data collected by local bird-watchers reveals numbers are plummeting.

If the trend continues, there may be no starlings left in the area in another five years.

The Surbiton and District Bird-Watching Society reports that the chatty birds with their distinctive vibrant green and purple sheen are now on the red danger list.

By comparing sightings at 50 Surbiton locations, watchers found that starling numbers have slumped from 961 to 494 in the space of a year.

The largest murmuration, as flocks are rather poetically known, was 300 in 2012... but just 80 a year later.

● Full story on p2

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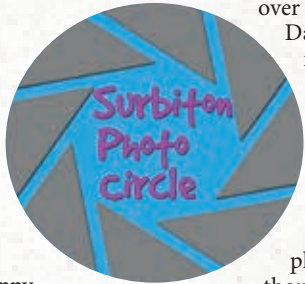
The Surbiton Photo Circle is a convivial club, with the next meeting on Monday, March 10 in Gordon Bennett! in Maple Road at 8pm.

Organised by farmers' market co-ordinator and Royal Photographic Society licentiate David Jacobson (www.andmakeitsnappy.com), the group has had speakers sharing tips, and advice clinics to explain what all the

buttons do on your camera.

"We're a friendly group for anyone who loves photography, or is just starting out, and we look forward to poring over pictures," said

David. "Last month, we tried an interactive exercise where we offered positive comments on improving each other's photographs. I thought it might end in tears, but to my relief it was a resounding success."



Gardening tips by Janice Cripps

Allow damp plants to breathe



Spring may be just around the corner, but for the gardener it barely matters; as usual the seasons are topsy-turvy, as demonstrated by the record winter rainfall and flooding which has left many gardens under water for weeks.

Plants need air in the soil to breathe, and if they are waterlogged for any length of time they can actually drown.

The first signs of a problem may be seen when leaves yellow or prematurely drop. The plant may wilt, looking like it needs water when the truth is that the damaged roots are simply incapable of absorbing any more.

Sometimes the plant will look stunted and sometimes it will put on a sudden spurt of growth and then just as suddenly die.

So what can be done? Take solace in the fact that

waterlogging is less damaging in winter than in spring when plants are growing and need more oxygen. With luck, your garden will recover when the water has eventually drained away.

Don't walk on sodden planting borders, and keep off the lawn as this will further compact the soil and make the



problem a lot worse.

At the start of the growing season cut back any damaged stems or branches which might possibly harbour disease.

The soil will have lost a lot of nutrients, so give your plants

a helping hand by applying a balanced fertilizer or foliar feed to encourage leaf and root growth.

If your garden has been affected by flood water, discard any edible crops nearing harvest as they may have been contaminated by pollutants and even raw sewage.

To be on the safe side, don't grow salads or other crops to be eaten raw for at least a year.

When the ground has dried out, improve your soil by digging it over, breaking up the compacted soil and adding compost.

If waterlogged soil persists, think about other solutions such as growing plants in raised beds, constructing a pond, creating a bog garden, or maybe building an ark...

Janice Cripps is a professional garden designer based in Surbiton. For advice, planting plans, or taking projects from concept to completion, visit www.janicecripps.co.uk

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Bird decline mystery

Numbers of garden birds in Surbiton are declining, with starlings and sparrows a cause for concern.

The Surbiton and District Bird-Watching Society, now in its diamond jubilee year, has been charting the fall in numbers.

House sparrows have now vanished completely from half of the 50 local sites the society monitors (39 of which are typical suburban back gardens), although numbers have stabilised in the past year. The same goes for song thrushes.

The largest number of sparrows recorded in any garden over the winter of 2012/13 was 26, but only at seven other sites were more than 10 house sparrows counted. Starling numbers have slumped from 961 to 494 in the space of a year.

Committee member Brian Wilson told The Good Life: "Starling numbers have been decreasing across most of the country for three decades, and no one is yet sure why. British Trust for Ornithology research seems to show high numbers of young birds not surviving their first year. They think part of the explanation may be food availability – starlings rely heavily on invertebrates.

"But as to why there should have been such a large decline locally, and in the space of a year... possible candidates could be food supply, farming practices, competition between species for nesting sites, disease or some combination. But it's speculation."

Bird-watcher Paul Hunter, who took this photo in Surbiton, suspects a decline in insects and weeds, partly caused by overzealous use of pesticides and herbicides, may be one explanation. "It is possible that the decline is due to problems in their breeding grounds, or here in the winter, or both," he said. "Birds

need habitat and food for all 12 months of the year.

"We do not shoot or trap them the way they do in many parts of southern Europe, but what we do do is more certain to reduce their numbers.

"An unfortunate side effect is that other birds and animals which prey on songbirds get the blame for any decline."

The 200-strong Surbiton & District Bird-Watching Society, going for 60 years, meets at 8pm at Surbiton Library Hall, Ewell Road, on the third Tuesday of the month. Visit www.encief.co.uk/sdbws, call membership secretary Gary Caine on 01372 468 432 or just bowl up.



Surbiton gains its first brewery, in Maple Road

Surbiton's first brewery opens next month in Maple Road.

It will be sited behind the relaunched Antelope, which now boasts a roaring fire, home-smoked meat, vinyl records on a turntable, 10 real ales, Sunday roasts, market-day breakfasts... and, in seven weeks, the chance to walk in and say 'A pint of Surbiton, my good man!'

It is planned to brew up to six different ales (the names are still being decided), probably including a pale ale and an old-fashioned porter.

Licensee James Morgan hinted that one of the new beers might be named after Maple Road.

Up to 60 casks of beer a week will be produced, some being made available to other local hostilities as well as the 11 pubs in the group run by

Morgan and business partner Richard Craig, pubs which include the Fox and the Sussex in Twickenham.

"It makes it commercially viable for us; we can afford to employ a proper brewer," said James, who holds out the possibility of Surbiton residents being allowed to design and brew their own beers in future.

Visitors to the farmers' market in Maple Road will, from May, be able to take draught Surbiton beers away in containers.

The Antelope remains a Greene King pub, with this micro-brewery pilot being an example of close co-operation between parent brewery and innovative tenants.

There is no sport any longer at the Antelope. The screens which used to show rugby games have gone... and with them former

landlord Jerry Carrol, who is now running a pub near Ascot.

The pub's kitchen, overseen by chef Piers Driver, makes as much use as possible of local suppliers, including Ewell Road butcher CD Jennings, the nearby French Tarte and Norbiton Cheese, a stallholder at the Maple Road farmers' market.

The menu includes whole baked camembert, smoked fish chowder and spicy fried baby squid with saffron mayo.

The Antelope has gone full circle, beginning life as a simple alehouse in 1852. Four years later it gained a full licence, serving Hodgson's beer, brewed in Kingston. In 1900 a skittle alley was built at the back.

The Antelope later became a Courage pub, switched to Whitbread in the 1980s and Greene King a decade ago.

Paddy power

Surbiton's Fircroft Trust holds an Irish ceilidh to mark St Patrick's Day on Saturday, March 15 from 7.30pm. The event is at St Paul's parish hall, Hook. Tickets £15 (£10 concs), including welcome drink, meal and live band. Call 020 8399 1772 or email office@thefircrofttrust.org

Buy, buy baby

Looking to springclean some of your outgrown baby and children's things? Book a stall at St Mark's church hall, St Mark's Hill, at 2pm on April 26, and keep all the proceeds. With more than 20 sellers, there are hundreds of quality nearly-new items for babies and children. Book a stall at www.mum2mummarket.co.uk/book-a-stall or email janine@mum2mummarket.co.uk Entry £2; two-for-one vouchers on the website.

Getting the bird

Congratulations to Erica Farmer, who won the Good Life turkey in our Christmas competition. "Thank you so much for the scrummy turkey... it has gone to a good home," said a delighted Erica.



Sarah is saluted

After four years' hard work, Sarah Taylor (pictured) has stepped down as co-chair of Maple Road farmers' market. Sarah, who has run Shoes At Last for a decade, helped win the 2013 Farmers' Market of the Year accolade, and has been pivotal in raising £35,000 for causes. "Sarah's tireless work has helped create a community we can all feel proud to be part of," said fellow market volunteer David Jacobson. "We will miss her involvement enormously but wish her every success in concentrating on her business and building up a shoe shop empire!"

We're staying

Rumours that Poundland was poised to pull out of the former Blockbuster store in Tolworth Broadway have been brushed away, despite the presence of a large 'to let' sign. "No, it's not true," said a weary member of staff. "We've just had new flooring and air-conditioning put in, and we wouldn't do that if we were closing."

Lion roars again



The Black Lion at the junction of Brighton Road and Maple Road has shed the scaffolding which enveloped it for weeks (above) to reveal a restored interior and exterior. Landlord Mark Sheehy said he was delighted with the refurbishment, which extends to the pub garden, where stripy padded seating now fills the outdoor room. Pictures of the new look in next month's Good Life.

Wildlife centre

A new nature reserve has opened on the Surbiton/Kingston boundary. A bird-watching hide has been built at the Hogsmill sewage works in Lower Marsh Lane; a quiet area where wildlife feels undisturbed. There is a car park. The reserve is a product of years of negotiating between Surbiton bird-watchers, the council and Thames Water.



The side of the Victoria pub, from St Andrew's Road, by Long Ditton artist Martin Alton, and – inset below – the town's third oldest boozer, the Fox & Hounds, Portsmouth Road

Grand tour of Surbiton's pubs

It's a wonder Surbiton Historical Society's members are still standing, as they recently toured all the area's pubs.

Nearly 100 people – safely seated in the library hall – were enthralled by descriptions of the origins of local watering holes by Richard Holmes, author of Pubs, Inns and Taverns of Surbiton and New Malden, a book which has been selling well ever since at the Regency Bookshop in Victoria Road.

No one is certain where it stood, but in 1692 Surbiton's first boozer was the delightfully named Three Tobacco Pipes. The Waggon and Horses (opposite the Assembly Rooms) came next, soon followed by the Fox & Hounds, Portsmouth Road. By 1870, after the railway was well established, there were 17 fully licensed pubs, plus eight alehouses. Eleven Victorian originals survive.

Some, such as The Victoria, seem to have been around forever. It was, in fact, built in around 1850 'for the requirements of tradesmen, mechanics and labourers, and a class of traveller who did not have the means to go The Southampton Hotel'.

The Southampton was the grand building which once stood at the side of the station forecourt, though the name later transferred to a dark, gloomy bar under Winthrop House, before vanishing in 1988. Its chandeliers now hang in the Cock & Bull pub in Cairns, Australia. In its heyday the Southampton was so popular, people would come from other parts of the country to take holidays there.

Pubs were used for rallies, vestry meetings, inquests as well as drinking holes.

In the modern era, the Duke of York, opposite the Vic, was once a branch of Curry's, while the Surbiton Flyer, next to the station, used to be a Barclays Bank. Wetherspoon's Coronation Hall began life as the Roxy cinema, later the Ritz, then a bingo hall before a brief fling as a naturist health club in the mid 90s.

The Lamb and the Black Lion appeared around 1854, while the long-vanished Globe is now Laithwaite's at the junction of Brighton and Portsmouth Roads. Name changes abound. The Prince of Wales (1851) turned into the New Prince in Ewell Road in 1992, the Queen Victoria (1859) turned into The Mad Hatter, while the Alpha Road area boasted The Angel, The Carpenters, The Paragon, The Britannia, The Brewery Tap and The Surbiton Arms.

● Artist Martin Alton has captured many of Surbiton's finest buildings in his distinctive style. His prints are available at the Pickled Pantry in St Mark's Hill. Mounted and framed, they cost £53. Email Martin (martin@altonart.co.uk) for more details. He can create original pen-and-ink drawings, A4 landscape-sized, for £120 unframed and £150 mounted and framed, working from life and concentrating on local buildings. Mounted and framed prints are also for sale at the Stitchery, Thames Ditton High Street.

Overheard in The Duke of York

A 12-year-old boy is walking down the street when a car pulls alongside. "I'll give you a bag of sweets if you get in the car," says the male driver. "No way," replies the boy. "What about a bag of sweets and £50?" asks the driver, rolling slowly to keep up. "I'm not getting in the car!" says the boy. "OK, £100 and a bag of sweets," the driver offers. "No!" shouts the boy. "What will it take to get you into the car?" asks the driver. The boy replies: "Listen Dad, you bought a Prius, now live with it."

The seat of all learning

Surbiton is becoming the new hub of adult education for the Royal borough. Courses are being concentrated in Surbiton from the summer, turning the King Charles Centre into a mini university.

The council is closing the North Kingston Centre (the old Tiffin Girls' School) in Richmond Road, Kingston, to make way for a new secondary school, and will instead offer a hugely expanded programme of subjects at the junction of Hollyfield Road and King Charles Road.

From Chinese brush painting to badminton, stained glass making to tai chi, quilting to bookbinding, childcare training to digital photography, Polish to yacht navigation, archaeology to practical gardening, wine appreciation to accounting software, Nordic walking to Turkish belly dancing... the subject range is vast.

Originally the council had planned to shift some courses to the Beaconsfield Centre in New Malden, but the plan has been revised to focus everything in Surbiton.

From September, everything that can be squeezed into the King Charles Centre will be... and anything that can't will be temporarily housed round the corner in Newent House, Browns Road.

The local history archive will move to Dukes Avenue, on the Kingston/Ham boundary.

Longer term, Kingston Council is weighing up the possibility of sharing adult education courses with neighbouring Richmond from 2015.

The £1.4million cost of relocation will be met by the government's education funding agency.



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Front is nailed-on certainty

The best-preserved Victorian shopfront in Surbiton will soon house a nail bar. As exclusively revealed by the Good Life, jeweller FP Turner & Sons (its frontage unchanged for 120 years) closed after Christmas. Manager Alison Hammerton told customers that online shopping and high business rates had made trading uneconomical.

It cost £90,000 a year to keep the Victoria Road shop going, including rates, wages and other overheads.

The interior wood and glass display cabinets were sold to a Wimbledon business, and the shop's safes were moved out in early January.

Now the £25,000-a-year rent and £7,000 rates will be paid by Five Star Nails, a family-run manicure, pedicure and nail extension

business started in 1998 by seven sisters and two brothers. A rival, Emma's Nails, is eight doors down the street.

Truong Van Bui, who applied for change of use, has been warned he does not have permission to alter the famous shopfront.

The 1,090 sq ft premises include a basement, loo and two car park spaces at the back.

The British Independent Retailers' Association says high-street small shops are "seeing flat sales at best", despite the Office for National Statistics claiming an 8.1% year-on-year rise in sales in the past couple of months... with jewellery supposedly leading the way.

Kingston Council is conscious that the old FP Turner shopfront has what it describes as 'townscape merit'.

Though not formally listed, it is a building of great historic interest and status.



Tolworth Greenway transplanted



A replica of the infamous Tolworth Greenway greeted audience members as they took their seats for the annual cornerHOUSE panto. Painted in contrasting greens and yellows, and laid up the aisle of the 150-seat auditorium in Douglas Road, the colourful path led to the stage steps... and onwards to a backdrop filmed projection of the real thing, complete with a brooding Tolworth Tower. The panto, The Belles of St Darcyan's - a St Trinian's spoof, played to 700 people.

Sharing talents

SeeAbility, a Surbiton charity, is asking people to share their talents to enhance the lives of people with sight loss and other disabilities.

Volunteers currently offer beauty treatments, massage, music and art training. Martel Atterbury, volunteer co-ordinator, told The Good Life: "Volunteers provide a link to the local community through the individuals we support, and in time build friendships."

"We provide full training and the volunteers find the time they spend rewarding. If someone can spare a couple of hours a week to garden, drive, offer companionship or join activities, we'd love to hear from them."

SeeAbility's supported living service in Surbiton allows five young people with complex disabilities to develop their independent living skills and become more involved in the community. Lord Coe is president of what was once the Royal School for the Blind, and the Duchess of Gloucester is patron. The charity has existed for 200 years.

Call Martel on 07787 336116 or email m.atterbury@seeability.org to learn more about volunteering, or visit www.seeability.org



Rebecca Alexander, who is helped by SeeAbility

Meeting the lady with the lamp

The lady with the lamp was celebrated at a recent meeting of Surbiton Historical Society, with 80 people gathering in the library hall to hear the life story of Florence Nightingale.

Speaker Paul Whittle got off to a rocky start by claiming Kingston Market Place's statue of Queen Anne was Queen Victoria (a collective howl of indignant voices corrected him), but he quickly recovered to illuminate and entertain the throng.

Florence was named after her parents' honeymoon destination ("Thank goodness they didn't choose Chipping Sodbury," quipped Paul), and grew up in a well-to-do household which, reluctantly, subsidised her work and helped establish the foundations of the nursing profession we now take for granted.

A whizz at maths and stats, she had what she took to be a divine message in her teens, telling her to get into nursing.

Despite parental objections, she became superintendent of a Harley Street hospital, then badgered war secretary Sidney Herbert - a family friend - to let her take a team of nurses to the Crimea, initially augmenting a small and ineffectual team of medical orderlies who consisted of Chelsea pensioners!

She helped transform the 'living hell' that was the British hospital in Scutari, now an Istanbul suburb, touring the wards with her famous lamp.

Later, thanks partly to her book Notes on Nursing, the caring profession emerged, developed and improved.

She never sought fame, and when she died in 1910 her tombstone carried the modest initials FN.

Among the audience for the lecture was Miriam Harrison, a former volunteer at London's

Florence Nightingale museum, who has visited Scutari, and even sat at Florence's desk.

Surbiton boasted a Balaklava Road in Victorian times, after the Crimean battle, with the name later tweaked to today's 'Balaklava'.

After the massacre of the Light Brigade in the infamous, heroic charge down a wrongly chosen, heavily fortified, valley, towns named Balaklava appeared in Australia, Canada, Jamaica, New Zealand and County Durham.



Miriam Harrison with guest speaker Paul Whittle

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Budgens has budged

Budgens has budged. It felt like it had been in Tolworth forever, but the branch at the junction of Ewell Road and Lenelby Road closed on February 19 and the distinctive caterpillar-green fascia display boards, proudly declaring ‘Budgens of Tolworth’, were flung into a skip.

These days, the shops are franchised – a far cry from the day John Budgen opened his first store in Maidenhead in 1872.

“In Budgens Tolworth, we have unfortunately been unable to find an appropriate retailer for the store. It will therefore cease trading,” said a spokesman for the Irish-run Musgrave Group, which owns the brand.

Sports Direct, the country’s largest sporting brand retailer, is among firms eyeing up the site.

Locals seemed mixed about losing a store that has been part of the community for decades.

“It was always a bit strange, and didn’t have half the things you needed... but it was handy and it was never crowded, and

the baguettes were freshly made and really good,” said one.

One hundred yards up the road, a new Sainsbury’s Local has opened on the site of the old Red Lion pub... with the lateness of the announcement that Budgens was closing giving redundant staff little chance to apply for jobs at the newcomer.

Tolworth food shoppers now also have a choice of M&S at Tolworth Tower, the 24-hour Tesco Express in the Esso garage, Iceland, the vast Best Foods halal minimart in the Broadway, Malar Foods (Sri Lankan and Indian specialities), Sarwar halal foods, Vaishna Superfoods and Raj, the food shop with the word Caribbean misspelt on its main sign.

In 140 years, the Budgens chain grew to nearly 200 shops, swallowing the 7/11 network of convenience stores along the way. The largest UK Budgens is in Holt, Norfolk.

● When the Budgens lettering was pulled down, the ghost of a previous incarnation, Bishop’s, was revealed. Anyone recall it?



Youth club’s plea

A youth club may have to close unless an urgent call for more leaders is answered.

The Long Ditton youth club is in crisis as three staff who have helped there over the past decade have all, for different reasons, had to hand in their notice at the same time.

Toni Izard is determined to keep the club going, and has appealed to anyone who can assist to come forward. “I want to leave no stone unturned in my efforts to recruit replacements and keep the club open,” she told The Good Life.

She has made a plea via the parish magazine of St Mary’s Church, Long Ditton, but hopes that wider publicity may help the search for volunteers.

“At the end of March we will be saying a sad farewell to Hilary, who has been my ‘right-hand man’ for the last eight years, Emma who has been a dedicated leader for six years and Lisa, who has also been a regular volunteer for six years,” she explained. “This means that the kids need you, or people you know, to volunteer for sessions, otherwise we will be unable to reopen the club after Easter.”

The club needs two people to volunteer as leaders approximately four times per term. They will be key holders who open and close the club and are in charge of the session. Also needed are a couple of general volunteers each session, to supervise the youngsters, join in activities and help set up and put away equipment.

“If just 10 people volunteer for one session per term, it would be enough,” said Toni. “The club would open term-time only, so no commitment is needed



during the holidays. No experience is necessary; common sense is all that is needed. We will show you the ropes and also offer free first-aid training.”

The club is staffed using an emailed volunteer rota, which simply entails typing in your name and ticking the dates you can do.

The Long Ditton youth club has even looked into the possibility of formally employing someone, but it would have to register as a charity to achieve that, entailing a lot of paperwork.

Anyone who can offer to help can call Toni on 07749 633 973 or email contactus@longdittonyouthclub.org.uk

● Pictured, youth club member Wesley Old enjoys some old-fashioned rough and tumble

Mavis honoured

The big smile belongs to Mavis Wilson of Pine Walk, Surbiton, who recently received the gold medal of the British Federation of Festivals for half a century’s voluntary service with the Kingston Festival of Performing Arts, which has now been running for 80 years.

Mavis received her award from local MP Ed Davey at the most recent festival concert.

He also made a presentation to Isobel Wright, who won the Rachel Steer memorial cup for romantic music, and gave long-service awards to Rosemarie and Peter Simmonds, who have been involved in running the annual concert for more than 40 years.

The Kingston Festival of Performing Arts gives people from a wide range of ages and abilities the chance to perform in different music, dance and speech categories.

The event was founded in 1932 as the Kingston upon Thames Musical Festival Society with the aim of encouraging performance, helped by feedback from qualified adjudicators.

Participants range in age from five to 80, with a series of medals and trophies up for grabs in stage dancing, speech and drama, piano, vocal and classical instruments.



Ed Davey and Mavis Wilson, pictured by David Bendell

Whose deal is it?

Bridge fans can play the game three times a week in one of Surbiton’s most attractive buildings, the Masonic Hall in The Crescent.

On Monday mornings at 10.30am, there is Chicago-style bridge; no need to find a partner, just turn up and play. The cost is £3 or, if you become a member, £25 for 13 weeks. For details, email petercv1940@hotmail.co.uk

There is also duplicate bridge on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, starting at 1pm. Again, visitors are welcome. The hall has free parking.

Ian Brown

Food festival planned

Following the success of last year’s month-long event, Surbiton can look forward to a second food festival in May.

The action starts on May 4 with the Seething Sardine Festival – a procession ending in St Andrew’s Square.

On May 10 and 11 there will be the Surbiton village fete and beer festival, also in the square, with numerous food stalls, and on May 17 there will be the regular monthly farmers’ market in Maple Road, followed by sports day and a picnic in Victoria rec.

Throughout the month of May there will be special offers at restaurants and food shops throughout Surbiton. Full details in April’s Good Life.



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Schools are expanding

Major expansion is planned at two of Surbiton's most popular schools, with two-form entry replaced by three.

From September, Maple Infants will begin growing from the current 180 capacity to 270, by boosting annual intakes from 60 to 90.

St Andrew's & St Mark's will rise from 240 to 360, again by bumping up the annual intake from 60 to 90.

Maple Infants and St Andrew's & St Mark's Junior (a CofE school

which prioritises 'faithful and regular worshippers at St Andrew's or St Mark's churches') – both in Maple Road – have been the subject of a month-long consultation process.

Both schools are already struggling to contain extra pupils. In January the infants school roll was 240 – 60 more than its theoretical limit, while St Andrew's & St Mark's squeezed in 287 pupils, despite officially being capped at 240.

The £2.9million cost will be met from Kingston Council's coffers.



Surbiton swimmer Tom Urry is disabled sports achiever of the year. Tom, right, was presented with his award in Kingston's Guildhall by Josef Baines from Interactive, London's advisory body on sport for disabled people. Tom, who trains every day at Kingston Royals Swimming Club, is studying on the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Sport at Kingston College. Last year he recorded a personal best time at the British International Disability Championships. "I was ecstatic to find out I had won the award," said Tom, who received the trophy on his birthday.

Ransacking Surbiton

People who are over 55 and, until now, have not had the chance of higher education, are benefiting from the Ransackers project.

The Ransackers Association, which encourages older people to use their life skills to embark on educational adventures, ran a one-day taster seminar last month at Hillcroft College in South Bank, Surbiton.

Sessions were led by Nic Foxell, Ryan Curtis and Kathleen Egan, from Age UK.

The unusual name of the Ransackers Association comes from the Gaelic word Rannsachadh, meaning to explore, scrutinise and discover, which is exactly what project founder Vi Hughes wanted for the original pilot group of older people.

Building on the Hillcroft College gathering, further courses are being held at Ruskin College, Oxford, and Fircroft College, Birmingham, in April and May.

Participating colleges provide the necessary tutorial, IT and study skills support for mature students, few of whom have written an essay or thought about academic work since they left school.

Having rediscovered the learning bug, some Ransackers go on to complete full degrees and even PhDs.

Ransackers courses have been run at Hillcroft in Surbiton since 2004. Full details can be found at the website www.ransackersassociation.org.uk

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BLAKES

Green season approaches

Fifteen years ago Surbiton Bowls Club's clubhouse was burnt to the ground in an arson attack. For a small, friendly mixed club which has played at Alexandra recreation ground, Tolworth, since 1921, it was a devastating blow. However, thanks to the determination of its members, the club rebuilt. It even took on the commitment of a long-term lease in January 2010

and has since received grants from Thames Community Foundation and the Surbiton Neighbourhood Committee, allowing the club to improve facilities.

It plays a full programme of league matches and friendlies.

The new season starts with open days at 2.30pm on April 26 and 27, when all are welcome, regardless of ability. Bowls are provided and

free coaching is available. Flat-soled shoes are all that is needed

to protect the playing surface, pictured. Trainers are fine.

Club nights are on Tuesdays, from 5.45pm, starting on April 29. All are welcome. The club is behind Surbiton Croquet Club, next to the Millennium Green.

● If you are interested, call the membership secretary, Keith Moss, on 020 8390 0638.

DUE TO A TECHINCAL
ISSUE THE CHICKEN
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BROKEN.

Staff at Surbiton's Waitrose are considering clubbing together to buy their sign-writer a dictionary after this notice appeared on the rotisserie chicken cabinet – or cabient – after a technical – or techincal – fault.



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Email Tim Harrison at timharrison444@hotmail.com

The ideal club if you have a sweet tooth

The talented stars of the Surbiton branch of the British Sugarcraft Guild recently repeated their award-winning creation of Surbiton station in sugar at Sandown Park's Creative Craft Show.

The model, pictured,



attracted admiring comments... and several prospective new members of the club, which meets at the United Reformed Church hall in Elgar Avenue on the second Wednesday of each month at 8pm.

Next meetings: March 12, a workshop practising Janet Carpenter's flowers; April 9, a demonstration by Mark Willis on the perfect chocolate techniques for Easter; April 10-12, exhibition at Cake International at ExCeL; April 25, demonstration by Surbiton branch members in Bantalls; May 14, agm.

The club is on Facebook. Look for Surbiton & District branch, British Sugarcraft Guild.

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Georgina's perspective

Artist Georgina Allen's inspiration is drawn from the wild and dramatic Pembrokeshire landscape, and from the objects she finds while walking her dog, Maud, round the streets of her home town, Surbiton.

Some have found their way into the still life study above – Still Life 11, oil on board – one of the pictures on display at her show at the Piers Feetham Gallery at 475 Fulham Road, SW6, directly opposite the main gate to Stamford Bridge, from March 26 to April 17.

Trained at Chelsea School of Art (she graduated in 1987), she was part of a British Council young painter touring exhibition in Spain in 1991, and has since had numerous shows in London, Oxfordshire and Wales.

"Arranged and painted with careful regard to the scale and proportion of the objects within each arrangement, what you can get is a greatly enlarged rendering of often quite small objects," wrote Nicholas Usherwood in the current issue of Galleries Magazine. "The effect is not only to make you pay proper attention to what you are looking at, but more importantly, and unexpectedly, to induce a sense of wonder and awe at the sheer incorrigible variousness of things."

Rocking at the Black Lion

Chris Page's Surbiton rock revival band Eddie and the Redheads is playing the Black Lion at 58 Brighton Road at 8.30pm on Saturday March 15, the Queen's Head in Richmond Road, Kingston, on Friday April 4 at 9pm, and the Royal Oak, 261 Ewell Road, at 8.45pm on Friday May 2.



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vinotequeofsurbiton@gmail.com

Roger Fowler and Meta Rocard had a very warm response from visitors to their recent joint show at the cornerHOUSE

Church is setting for majestic music

Monteverdi's monumental setting of the Vespers was revolutionary in its time, and has lost none of its vitality in the intervening four centuries.

St Andrew's church in Maple Road will echo to the 1610 work, from simple hymns to to exuberant 10-part choruses, as Kingston Choral Society performs what will be the closing concert of this year's Kingston Festival of the Voice.

It starts at 7.30pm on March 29, with Andrew Griffiths conducting. Tickets are £15 (concs £13, U18s £5) from 020 8977 4801 or via www.kingstonchoralsociety.org.uk

Soloists include soprano Julia Doyle (inset, right, courtesy Raphaëlle Photography). Joining the singers, the English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble and the Purcell Orchestra.

Other Festival of the Voice events this month include jazz singer Tina May illustrating



the role of the voice in jazz at the cornerHOUSE on Tuesday March 11, 8pm (£5); Adventures in Electronica at St Mark's hall on Saturday March 22, 7.30pm (£5); a singing workshop at the same hall (£15) at noon on Sunday March 23 with The Voice vocal coach Joshua Alamu; and on March 25 and 26 at the cornerHOUSE, Kingston Junior Drama Company's show Adventure in Space, directed by David Lawson Lean.



James Pearson-Harris's photographic exhibition Face London 2014 is at the cornerHOUSE this month, with a gala evening on Tuesday, March 18 from 7pm. He has been snapping people in the capital for two years, capturing "the wonderful multi-cultural richness that is London".

Drizzle in KT6

A damp day at the Brighton Road/ Maple Road junction (that's the Black Lion on the right), captured by Surbiton architect-turned-artist Rod Pearson, whose watercolours are on show at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, March 30 to May 3, with a gala evening on Tuesday April 22 at 7pm.

Rod does landscapes, townscapes, boats and buildings. "The inspiration is whatever will make a good picture, and I try to make them tell a bit of a story," he said. Prices range from £120 to £250, and Rod is happy to take commissions.

At a recent show at Thames Ditton's View Gallery, he exhibited seven paintings... and sold the lot.

Double act is arty success

Two Surbiton artists were delighted with the reception they received after holding a joint exhibition at the cornerHOUSE.

Roger Fowler said: "I've always been interested in wildlife, and drawing, but never thought I'd combine them. I joined the Society for All Artists and went to a pastel workshop. I stood at an easel for the first time, and did a picture of a lion.

"Now my bedroom has become an artroom. I went to night school, and it gave me the idea of being able to do it, and taught me perspective. I especially like drawing big cats, and I visited a wolf conservation trust near Reading, and went wolf walking."

Meta Rocard added: "My style will continue to evolve as long as the ideas keep coming in. I'm currently working on some First World War images, with the theme of poppies. I've visited some of the battlefields and I hope to incorporate images of the graves."

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Kingston College Ofsted rated Grade 2 'Good' in all areas.

Charity shops reveal our inner souls

Charity shops are just full of junk, right? Wrong! The items found in them can reveal the deepest secrets of the community. With that in mind, I have conducted one of the greatest social evaluations known to mankind; I have snooped round Surbiton's charity shops to discover what the items we Surbitonians once owned say about us. Behold.

We are a creative bunch (*The Ultimate Book of Quilts*, Fircroft Trust). 'Ultimate', because we Surbitonians take our creativity seriously (anyone got a copy of *Extreme Bedding?*).

We enjoy sport, but only sensible sports that don't involve leaping off the side of mountains or out of planes (*The Early Days of Cricket*, Oxfam); in fact, we like the idea of sport, but would rather read about it than actually play it (*Beyond the Links: Golfing Stories, Collectables and Ephemera*, British Heart Foundation. Tea, anyone?).

We love animals but are tragically uncertain of our ability to look after them (*500 Ways to be a Better Tropical Fishkeeper*, Fircroft Trust), and we have a keen interest in history (*Ultimate Time Team Companion*, Oxfam) which we like to extend to our crockery (enormous Battle of Waterloo commemorative tankard in the British Heart Foundation).

Some have excellent tastes in music (LPs of Music of the 1940s, Mahler, Beethoven, *The Burt Bacharach Collection*), and some of us don't (*Best of the Vengaboys*, Oxfam).

We are a town of boozers and lusher (the astounding hoards of every type of glass, tumbler and decanter known to man, along with a glut of novelty corkscrews, in every shop), and we get drunk and pilfer things, and are too embarrassed to return them the next day (the guilty collection of Carling

and Strongbow glasses in the Fircroft Trust).

We have an undying curiosity about the fundamentals of human existence (*Electric Principles 3, Mathematics 3*, Cancer Research). What happened to 1 and 2?

We enjoy architecture-themed tableware (teapots in the shape of thatched cottages, in pretty much every shop; they're phenomenal). And we can't quite shake off our old friend Margo Leadbetter (fragranced drawer liners, British Heart Foundation).

We have the best taste in clothing this side of Shannon Corner (the fabulous gold sequined hat in Oxfam, the plethora of shoulder-padded 80s blouses and assortment of novelty ties in all shops), but we are also incredibly disturbed (the terrifying Talking Drill Sergeant doll in the Fircroft Trust window. Two questions: Why and Who?).

Finally, we are anxious about the future and bumble around looking to unfathomably vague instructions from our ancestors (*Hints and Tips from Times Past*, Oxfam), and then give up and hide in the nostalgic comfort of yore (*Memories of the 1970s* board game, Princess Alice).

To conclude, we are a town of artistic, lazy, anxious, well-dressed dipsomaniacs who, despite our problems, maintain standards and appearances with a pleasantly-scented drawer. Good work, Surbiton.

Becky Mayhew



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Howzat for a match?

England's cricketers are still licking their wounds after a 5-0 Ashes test whitewash down under... but this historic picture captures an altogether gentler era.

The date is September 27 1933. The location, the Alexandra recreation ground at the corner of Alexandra Drive and King Charles Road. The occasion, the eighth annual Surbiton Hospital fundraising cricket match, between a local XI and a team of county cricketers, including Jack Hobbs, led by Hobbs' fellow Surrey opener Andy Sandham.

Work was about to begin on Surbiton Hospital in Ewell Road, with the fundraising week adding £700 to the coffers. The cost of the 62-bed hospital (now the site of the Surbiton Health Centre) was £38,812, with each ward facing south west to maximise natural light.

Hobbs (capless, fourth from right) played for Surrey for 30 years and is still regarded as one of the finest batsmen, and fielders, the country produced.

A one-time member of the New Malden Home Guard, he and other players autographed pictures in the clubhouse to boost the kitty. Occasionally photos come up for auction. A 1927 signed photo is currently on eBay at £144, while this sepia beauty, with signatures in blue fountain pen ink, recently sold for £80.

From left: Denis Hendren (Middlesex), Arthur Wellard (Somerset), Laurie Eastman (Essex), Freddie Brown (Surrey), Andrew Sandham (Surrey), Ted Brooks (Surrey), Jack Hobbs (Surrey), Alf Russell (Essex), Jack O'Connor (Essex) and Alf Gover (Surrey).

Freddie Brown, a leg-break bowler, had been on the infamous 1932/33 'bodyline' Ashes tour of Australia which England won 4-1. In 1933 he was named as a Wisden cricketer of the year for achieving 100 wickets and 1,000 test runs the previous year.

Hundreds packed the rec to watch, with uniformed nurses updating the scoreboard. There was also a raffle, with the first prize... a Morris Minor!

Surbiton, assembled from half a dozen local teams, batted first, notching a respectable 240 for 8 by lunch.

Top scorer, with 60, was WD Chambers, pictured left, an athletic former Kingston Grammar School pupil and bank manager who had also represented Surrey as a hockey player.

In reply, Sandham's batsmen cruised to 333 for 6, with Hobbs achieving 110 and Brown 108. On this occasion, Hobbs and Hendren had opened.

Mr R Knott, the Alexandra rec groundsman, had worked hard to produce a good wicket. It was said that he had 'coaxed, threatened, rolled and watered the wicket until it looked like a billiard table'. In the event, September 27 1933 turned out to be an overcast day, with spots of rain, making the outfield very slow.

Afterwards, 640 people enjoyed a dance at Kingston's Tudor restaurant, and the following week there was a variety night at Surbiton Assembly Rooms to boost the fundraising total further.

Tim Harrison



Healthier food wins award

Surbiton YMCA has won the first award in a healthy eating initiative.

The community café at the end of Victoria Road has been given a pat on the back for reducing fat and salt in its food. The 'healthier catering commitment' is run by the council's environmental health team to reward eateries which steer customers away from junk and towards better choices.

All types of food businesses including restaurants, canteens, takeaways, pubs and sandwich shops can sign up, and are assessed against a checklist.

The leader of the council, Liz Green, presented the Y with a certificate.

For its part, the YMCA – celebrating its 140th anniversary this year – said it would continue helping people improve their health via better menus. The YMCA hosts the fortnightly From The Ground Up organic veg collection scheme in Surbiton, with any leftover organic produce presented to the kitchens.

The Orphans

by Morris Thain

Remember the orphans abandoned in shops:
A packet of pasta, a jar of rollmops
Stray packs and jars litter the space by the tills;
An unripe banana, a packet of pills

A small bag of bangers - were they meant for tea?
A carton of ricecakes (they're calorie-free)
The scanner goes bip-bip, the shopper's away,
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Each day the conveyor leaves something behind
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